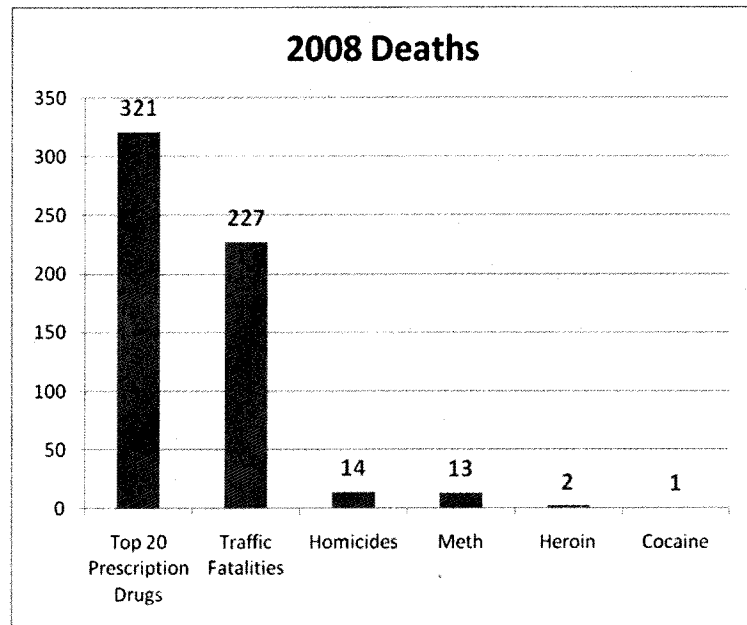


Benefits of a Prescription Drug Registry for Montana Prescribers

Prescription drug abuse is on the rise. Since the 1990s, unintentional drug overdoses have increased dramatically, led by the rising number of opioid-related overdoses. Today, unintentional drug overdose is the nation's second leading cause of accidental death. In Montana, it is *the* leading cause. But Montanans are not dying from heroin or meth overdoses; prescribed medications are causing the most deaths.

Other signs of increasing prescription drug abuse:

- Emergency department visits related to opioid abuse more than doubled between 2004 and 2008. (CDC)
- Substance abuse treatment admissions for prescription drug abuse increased 400% between 1998 and 2008. (SAMHSA)
- Prescription drugs are the drug-of-choice for 12 and 13 year-olds. (National Survey on Drug Use and Health)



Prescribers are on the front lines of this problem and may struggle to know when to prescribe powerful controlled substances. A prescription drug registry in Montana will assist pharmacists and prescribers in assessing patient information and providing appropriate patient care, while preventing drug diversion and abuse.

Montana's prescription drug registry will:

- **Supplement a patient's medical history.** This information will be particularly helpful for prescribers with new patients, or for emergency departments and walk-in clinics, when medical histories are not readily available. While pharmacies will be required to report prescriptions for schedule II-V controlled substances when they are filled, prescribers and dispensers are not required to check the registry before writing or filling a prescription.
- **Help distinguish pill-seekers from patients with legitimate medical needs.** By checking a patient's report before writing a prescription, prescribers will have confidence in prescribing adequate relief for their patients, without having to worry about contributing to drug diversion or addiction.

- **Better treat patients.** Using the registry to compare prescriptions written by multiple providers will help patients avoid dangerous drug interactions. In the case of an emergency, when a patient is unconscious or unable to communicate, the healthcare provider may use the registry to identify any essential medications the patient is taking.
- **Track prescriptions written under your DEA number.** Prescribers and dispensers will be able to view prescriptions filled under their DEA number to ensure that nothing suspicious or illegal is occurring.
- **Prevent doctor shopping.** The existence of a prescription drug registry will serve as a deterrent to "doctor-shopping" patients who realize they *will* be caught. Emergency departments in Billings have seen more patients from Wyoming, which has a prescription drug registry. They come to Montana to get their pain medications because they know that, here, they will not be identified as pill-seekers.
- **Save lives.** A recent study by the Ohio Department of Health found that 16 percent of Ohioans who died because of unintentional drug poisoning had a history of doctor shopping within the last two years.

Montana's prescription drug registry limits law enforcement access to prescription information:

- Law enforcement must get an investigative subpoena to access information from the registry.
- Licensing or regulatory boards will not have access to information about what individual health care professionals are prescribing, unless the professional is the subject of an active investigation related to drug misuse or diversion.

Currently, 43 other states have passed legislation authorizing prescription drug registries, and 34 are fully operational. The experience in these states has been overwhelmingly positive:

- Over 90% of physicians surveyed in California said that the registry is an effective tool for "maintaining the health and care of [their] patients."
- In a comprehensive study published in October 2010, researchers concluded that doctors and pharmacists view the Kentucky registry, "KASPER," as an effective tool to reduce drug abuse and diversion, and in making treatment decisions.
- In Maine, the percentage of individuals entering substance abuse treatment as a result of a physician's referral more than doubled after a statewide registry was implemented.
- In states with a registry, 90-97% of the use comes from prescribers and pharmacists.